

Seuda Shlishis, Parshas Chukas, 5765

At the third Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlit" a spoke inspiring words on the meaning of the verse (*Tehillim*, Ch. 4): "When I was in distress, You opened a wide expanse for me", based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 195.

Rebbe Nachman says: "It is written: 'When I was in distress, You opened a wide expanse for me.' This means that even from within the distress itself, Hashem opens a wide expanse for us. For if one would contemplate the loving kindnesses of Hashem, one would see that even when Hashem challenges a person with difficulties, from within the very difficulty itself, Hashem also opens a wide expanse for him and increases His loving kindness towards him. Aside from our hope that Hashem should save us soon from all troubles and do much good with us, still, even in the very midst of the hardship itself, He widens the straits we are in." (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that in this lesson Rebbe Nachman offers us awesome advice and encouragement for all the days of our lives, namely, that one should always look for the wide openings that Hashem opens up for him in the very midst of his troubles. For although a person may go through quite a lot (and there is no one who is free from troubles and suffering), nevertheless, if he would just take a good look at his life, he would understand that the entire purpose of the troubles and suffering is only to bring him closer to Hashem and closer to his true self. And if he thought deeply about it he would realize that from all of the troubles that have befallen him great benefits have also come out, as our holy Sages have commented (*Talmud Yerushalmi Taanis* 11a) on the verse "In a time of distress, You have opened a wide expanse for me": "Dovid said before Hashem: 'Master of the universe, every hardship I have gone through, you have widened it for me. I went through the ordeal with Bas Sheva and you gave me Shlomo. I went through the crises and hardships of Israel and you gave me the *Beis Hamikdosh*.'" For Dovid *HaMelech* had this skill, and he was an expert in it – the skill to find Hashem in all of his sorrows, and in this way he wrote the book of Psalms which is filled with praises to His Name. Even though many troubles and afflictions befell him from childhood through old age, he did not forsake his way of praying to Hashem and singing and offering praises before Him. He

constantly searched for the expanses that Hashem opened up for him within the hardships and he praised His Name for them. And this is what he said in the verse mentioned before (*Tehillim*, Ch. 4): “Answer me when I call, oh G-d of my righteousness, When I was in distress You opened an expanse for me; Be gracious to me and hear my prayer”: “You, my G-d, Who does righteousness with me, behold, my entire life, whenever I was in distress, You have widened things for me, for I have found the expanses that You have opened up for me within the troubles. And for this I am begging: Be gracious to me and hear my prayer that I should merit to come out completely from all the troubles.” For when a person merits to find Hashem’s G-dliness within everything that befalls him, not forsaking his way of praying to him for every detail of his life, then in the end, Hashem will save him from all his troubles and he will merit to find great expansiveness, relief and blessing in every matter.

This ability to find Hashem within the troubles and not to flee from Him no matter what is a special strength that the Jewish nation has above all the nations of the world, for Israel are “those who are carried [by Hashem] from the womb (Isaiah, Ch. 46)” and they are called children of Hashem who accept upon themselves with love the decrees of their Father in heaven and are, in the root of their souls, unable to separate themselves from Him at all. The nations of the world do not have this skill. As soon as some trouble or suffering comes upon them, they curse the object they perceive to be the source of their pain and even curse their gods, because they do not have this skill of “When I was in distress, You opened a wide expanse for me”. Therefore, we find in the Talmud (*Avoda Zara* 3a): “In time to come, when the nations of the world seek reward from Hashem like that of Israel, Hashem will say to them, ‘I have an easy mitzvah called *sukkah*, go and do it. Right away, each one goes and builds himself a *sukkah* atop his roof and Hashem causes the hot sun to beat down upon them as if it were the middle of summer and [not being able to tolerate the heat for the sake of the mitzvah] each one gives his *sukkah* a good kick as he walks out of it.” For with regard to the nations of the world, there is no concept like this of holding one’s ground within the pain and suffering; rather as soon as some bitterness befalls them, they run, unlike the Jewish people who, even if they need to leave the *sukkah* because of the heat or rain, leave with submissiveness and shame and they long to be able to return as soon as possible. Therefore, the distinction here is made specifically through the mitzvah of *sukkah*, for the *sukkah* is called the ‘shadow of faith’ ([source?](#)), and the mitzvah of *sukkah* reveals the eminent level of Israel with respect to their strong faith in Hashem - how even when

pain and afflictions befall them, they accept it all with love and know that Hashem is opening a wide expanse for them within their troubles; and in the end, He will widen things for them completely.

Therefore, converts will not be accepted in the days of Moshiach (Talmud *Yevamos* 24b), but only before Moshiach comes. For in an unredeemed world, who would want to live with the Jewish people in their suffering and afflictions? - Only those who have the strength to bear the yoke of Hashem even in times of pain and hardship. *They* will have permission to come close. In this world, the G-d fearing and upright people suffer much from the wicked and base people who pursue and afflict them. But in time to come, their level will be revealed to everyone, as Rebbe Nachman has said (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 66): “Our main greatness and splendor will be revealed in time to come, for then everyone will see the greatness and splendor of the Tzaddikim and the upright. Happy are they. Praiseworthy is their lot.” Therefore, happy is the one who always goes with the teaching of “When I was in distress, You opened a wide expanse for me”, finding the expanses of Hashem in all the details of his life. For then, he will live a truly good and sweet life. And in the end, he will merit complete expansiveness in every matter. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these teachings to our parsha in the following way. It is written (*Bamidbar*, Ch. 20): “Moshe sent emissaries from Kadeish to the King of Edom: ‘So said **your brother** Israel: You know all the hardship that has befallen us. Our forefathers descended to Egypt...We cried out to Hashem and He heard our voice....Please let us pass through your land.’” We need to understand why Moshe Rebbeinu needed to tell the King of Edom these things – “...all the hardship that has befallen us ... We cried out to Hashem and He heard our voice.” Why would this make a difference to the King of Edom - that troubles have passed over Israel from then until now? But according to the words of Rebbe Nachman we can understand it very well. Moshe *Rebbeinu* revealed to the King of Edom the greatness of Israel’s strength, namely, that they have the power to strengthen themselves in any situation and they accomplish this through the advice mentioned above of “When I was in distress, You opened a wide expanse for me”. They are always finding the openings and the expansiveness that Hashem creates for them within their troubles. And this is: “**You know all the hardship that has befallen us...We cried out to Hashem and He heard our voice**” – we are always crying out to Hashem from the midst of our troubles and He hears our voice and widens the straits we are in. Therefore, you should permit us to pass through your land on our way to the Land of Israel, for we have paid the debt

that had been placed upon us, and you have no right to lay claim to the Land of Israel as an inheritance, as Rashi explains (verse 14): “We are **brothers**, sons of Abraham, to whom it was said (*Bereishis*, Ch. 13): ‘Know for sure that your seed shall be a stranger [in a land not theirs], and upon both of us [being of Abraham’s seed] was the obligation of paying that debt. **‘You know all the hardship that has befallen us’** – it was for this reason that your father [Esav] separated himself from our father, as it is said (*Bereishis*, Ch. 6): ‘And he [Esav] went to another land on account of Yaakov, **his brother**’ – on account of the debt which was upon both of them and he cast [the whole debt] upon Yaakov.... Just as you have not paid the debt, you also have no right to lay claim to the land of Israel as an inheritance. Give us therefore a little assistance [by permitting us] to pass through your land. (These are the words of Rashi.)” It is only the nation of Israel who accepted upon themselves to pay off the debt of “Your seed shall be a stranger in a land not theirs”, for they can always find the wide openings that Hashem makes for them in difficult times and they know that it is worth tolerating everything in order to reach their desired goal. “But, you,” says Moshe, “who did not accept upon yourselves to pay the debt, in the way of the nations who cannot tolerate pain and bitterness, you have no right to lay claim to this inheritance because you have no relationship to it. Only permit us to reach the land that Hashem has promised us, since from everything we went through, in the end, we will undoubtedly merit to reach our goal.” Now it is very clear why Moshe *Rebbeinu* related all of these things to the King of Edom. May Hashem help us to see very soon the salvation of Israel, and He will open wide for us the straits, troubles and afflictions, spiritually and physically and we will greet our righteous Moshiach speedily in our days. *Amen v’amen*.